

“Slow to Believe?” – Luke 24:13-35

This season, this Sunday is a time when we reflect on the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For many, it is a special family time, a time to get together, celebrate family traditions and that is all good. But we must never forget the real reason for the season and that is to celebrate Jesus Christ.

There are a lot of people who just don't get it.

“Why, pastor, would God kill His own Son to punish my sin?”

“That doesn't make sense!”

“Why didn't He just forgive us all?”

“Isn't God Love?”

I think the problem is, that many of us try to understand God from our own perspective. That will never work.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Don't ever try to conform Almighty God to your pre-conceived ideas. Don't try to contain Him in your box. Don't attempt to judge God according to your horribly warped sense of justice. God is God, and you are not.

That is why He gave us the Bible. When you find things in the Bible that are hard to understand, it is because you are looking at those things from your perspective. The Bible is God-breathed. The Bible teaches us to look at things from God's perspective.

But often times, we don't get it. We don't fully understand because we tend to read and remember those parts that we really like and we ignore the things that make us uncomfortable. That was certainly true among the devout Jews of the First Century. They were expecting Messiah. They were looking forward to the coming Christ but their pre-conceived idea was that Messiah would come, throw off the yoke of Rome and establish Israel at the head of the nations They were looking for a conquering King. They got a suffering Servant.

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday, the crowds shouted “Hosanna to the Son of David” but five days later, the crowd cried “Crucify Him, we have no king but Caesar.” Even the elect didn't get it. They were slow to believe all of what the prophets had spoken.

Before I read our text for this morning, let me set the stage. Among the followers of Jesus, this Passover feast had begun on a really high note but by the time the Sabbath rolled around, they were absolutely crushed. Jesus was dead, buried in a rich man's tomb. I'm sure most just wanted to go home and try to make some sense of it. However, travel was forbidden on the Sabbath, so they had to wait until the first day of the week, what we call Sunday. And that's what the two principle characters of this account were doing.

Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, “What

kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see." Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread. (Luke 24:13-35)

This passage is worthy of intensive study. Many, many books have been written about it and it's no wonder. But this morning, I want to focus on just two verses right in the middle.

Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25-26)

I want to ask, this morning, why were they slow of heart to believe? Secondly, I want to look at the sure-fire remedy for this unbelief. And finally, I want to exhort you to respond in the only logical, appropriate way to the application of the remedy.

I've already touched on why these guys didn't get it. They had a pre-conceived idea of what Messiah's arrival was going to look like. It's hard to blame them. It is what they had been taught from childhood.

But in a larger sense, it is true of all of us. We are all stained by the fall. We are sinners. We all have a sin nature. And as I shared with you last week, that sin nature causes us to view the world through the lens of "What's in it for me?" In our natural state, we are completely incapable of asking "What's in it for God?"

You know, we spend a lot of time ruminating over the consequences of sin ... for us. But what does sin do to God? The simple answer is that it disrespects Him. It dishonors Him. We value our sinful desires more than we value His honor. It detracts from His glory.

In Romans, chapter 1, we find a description of those who dishonor God.

... because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. (Romans 1:21-23)

“Oh, but pastor, that’s idolatry. I don’t do any of that.”

Yes you do. Anything in your life that you value more than Almighty God is an idol.

Anything.

When you refuse to acknowledge God’s right to tell you how to live, it insults His honor. It robs him of His glory and that is sin. We all do it.

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

When you fail to glorify God with your life, you instead change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image. You use your imagination to redesign God. You create a false god who will allow you to do whatever you want and that’s why Jesus had to come into the world, live a perfect, sinless life, then sacrifice that life on the cross. He died to save you from your sins ... that’s for sure. But in a larger sense, He died to restore the glory you robbed from God.

So, these guys who were walking along the road to Emmaus, had a pre-conceived idea of who Messiah was and what He had come to do. What is the remedy for that particular problem? The remedy is always God’s Holy Word. What did Jesus do? Look at verse 27:

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. (Luke 24:27)

Jesus took them to scripture! When Luke writes “beginning at Moses”, he’s referring to the first 5 books of the Bible. He’s talking about Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. And the phrase “all the Prophets” refers to everything else. He’s talking about our Old Testament. The whole thing. It is all about Jesus and it tells about Messiah being a suffering servant as well as a conquering King.

Jesus testified to this. He was perfectly consistent. At one point He said:

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. (John 5:39)

If you want to know who Jesus is, you have to read this Bible. If you want to know what Jesus wants from you, you have to read the Bible. If you want to understand how you can be restored to God and enjoy an eternity in heaven, it is all here.

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. (John 1:18)

Jesus is the answer. He is the only answer.

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

You have to read this Bible. You need to hear this Bible preached. And you have to believe what the Bible says about Jesus.

If you find yourself slow to believe, it's because you are deceived by your own sin nature. The remedy is the truth of God's word, but it is not enough to just read God's word. It's not enough to simply hear God's word preached, You have to respond. So, what is the appropriate response?

Jesus died to pay the penalty for your sins. He rose again to prove that His sacrifice was accepted, but also to make it possible for you to have a living relationship with Him. Jesus said:

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. (John 10:27-28)

That is the best deal ever! Can you hear Jesus' voice? Will you follow Him? If you do, He will take away your sin and give you eternal life.

Let me tell you about another individual who was slow to believe. The Apostle Thomas gets a bunch of bad press, which I think is largely undeserved. It comes from the Biblical account: After Jesus rose from the grave, He appeared to the disciples, but Thomas wasn't there.

Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." (John 20:24-25)

To Thomas, it was just too good to be true. He couldn't accept it. He wanted proof. He was slow to believe. Jesus graciously gave him what he asked for:

And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." (John 20:26-27)

Jesus has also given you proof of His resurrection. It is right here in the Bible, in what we call our New Testament. This is the testimony of the Apostles, all of whom sealed their testimony with their life. They knew the Resurrection was historical fact and they would not recant. Here's your proof.

Thomas' response is absolutely profound:

And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

How will you respond? Please, do not be unbelieving, but believing. Believe that you stand guilty of treason before your God. Believe that the just wage of your treason is eternal suffering in the pit of hell. Believe that God loves you anyway. He loves you so much that He sent Jesus to pay the penalty for your sin. Jesus has done all the work. All you have to do is believe. Turn to Him and cry, "My Lord and my God!" Say it with me: "My Lord and my God!" Say it to Jesus: "My Lord and my God!"

... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the

heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)